

COLTON PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting

Thursday 11th April 2019 at 7:30p.m.

Colton Village Hall, Bellamour Way, Colton

AGENDA

1. Welcome and introductions

Acting Parish Council Chairman, Shirley Barnett thanked everyone for giving their time to attend and introduced herself as both Parish Councillor and District Councillor. Parish Councillors Sarah Plater, Matt Crompton, Noel Talbot and Steve Jenkinson were also in attendance, together with Clerk Alison James and 25 parishioners.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Michael Fabricant MP, Mike Wilcox LDC, County Councillor Martyn Tittley, Parish Councillor Emma Godwin and parishioner Ruth Williams.

3. Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting held 12th April 2018

These were approved and signed.

4. Local policing and Neighbourhood Watch

No report had been received from the police, which was disappointing.

5. Parish Council Acting Chairman's report on the past year

Cllr Shirley Barnett explained that the Parish Council's precept for the coming year had seen a small reduction, in contrast to the increases made by LDC, SCC and the police within the council tax. The PC's reduction was achieved partly by relying on its reserves.

The PC was still in receipt of money from HS2 and was using it for the upkeep of Stockwell Heath. This included the pond and grass cutting. The PC was still funding the grass cutting at the Village Hall and this had been

extended to other areas in the parish, following the withdrawal of some of the County Council cutting.

The Parish News was still supported by the PC and the increase in its contribution had helped to produce a more refined newsletter.

The PC still maintained the Closed Burial Ground and had full responsibility for the Open Burial Ground. This would be reported under agenda item 7 d).

The New Playground was in full use and enjoyed by all who used it. Money from the PC reserves had made a contribution and resulted in an asset that we could all be proud of. The small group who had brought the playground to fruition were particularly commended for all their vision and hard work. HS2 continued to create concern. Andy Chappell and Ken Rider were thanked for their valuable contributions. The latest cause for concern was the proposed Gas Fired facility, which had seen the PC become involved with the planning department at LDC. The PC contribution, by way of comments, was ongoing and would continue until this issue was resolved. Many residents had put pen to paper and this was a small comfort. Again, the help of Andy Chappell and Ken Rider needed to be acknowledged and also members of the PC, who had spent time and effort in putting forward views.

The PC still regarded the state of our roads as being inadequate and, in some places, dangerous, with frequent flooding at certain times of the year. Again, with the help of our County Councillor Martyn Tittley, the PC would continue to make views known to SCC. Residents were encouraged to report problems, as the more that do, the more impact they are likely to have.

The War Memorial was looking very dignified and the lighting helped those who passed it at night to perhaps become a little thoughtful as to what it represents. The brickwork in the back wall was to be completed soon.

Shirley Barnett added that she had read through her report for the previous year, and noted that the main points then, as now, reflected the concerns of residents and councillors. It showed how, as a parish, we believed that with ongoing effort we could make a difference. Patience was sometimes worn thin, but we must continue to support what we hold dear.

In the coming year there would be a new council who would need everyone's support. Noel and Steve had taken on the task of joining with

Sarah, Emma and Matthew. There would be two vacancies, which in time would be advertised for residents to be co-opted. Shirley Barnett hoped this would take the number to a full council of seven and stressed that no one should hesitate to contact the Clerk or councillors about any issues.

6. Presentation of Parish Council Accounts (unaudited) for 2018/19

The Clerk presented a copy of the provisional, unaudited accounts for 2018/19 showing that income had exceeded expenditure by about £470. The closing balance at 31st March was £38,159, a large proportion of which (about £24,800) was earmarked for specific purposes and projects.

On opening to discussion, it was pointed out that as the Parish Council owned the War Memorial, the cost of the refurbishment works should not be listed as a donation. It was agreed that the Clerk should move this item to a more appropriate category in the accounts table.

7. Reports from Local Organisations:

a. Colton Parochial Church Council

Marie Havelock explained that full details were available in the Annual Report. St Mary's Church was open for weekly worship and quiet prayer and also special event worship, such as the moving Remembrance service held the previous year and an open morning for the bereaved. School services were held regularly and well attended by parents and grandparents and there was also Sunday School and Messy Church. There were coffee mornings on Saturdays and a monthly Soup and Cheese lunch.

The church had supported the Parish News, together with the Parish Lands Trust and Parish Council, keeping it free to all and the editor Laura Wilson had done a sterling job, with help from Bill Brown. They were on the lookout for a new editor and now had a dedicated laptop and support team. The fabric of the church was also in good condition, with the electrics having been upgraded and all lights now LED.

b. Colton Village Hall Management Committee

Chairman Richard Monbiot reported on a good year, with a large increase in bookings and income. At their previous AGM they had recruited several new committee members. However, some representatives were to resign at the next AGM, which would mean that a large part of the community would no longer be represented and the VHMC was looking at ways to make membership more

attractive. The new playground was very popular and a great asset and the VPMC was looking at a further phase for teenagers.

There were several maintenance issues such as the roof and main entrance doors and a painting party was to be organized. Re-surfacing of the car park was still intended when reserves became sufficient.

c. Colton Parish Lands Trust

Keith Williscroft explained that it was an historic trust and charity, to manage small areas of land around the parish and 2 houses in Hollow Lane. It was also proud to manage the Lower Martlins and marsh for the benefit of the whole community. It offered financial help for hospital visiting, grants for disability aids and equipment and towards expenses for education and apprenticeships, with all requests being considered in confidence. The Trust also supported the senior citizens' Christmas meal and the Parish News.

d. Colton Burial Ground Administrative Committee

Sarah Plater, as a councillor member of the BGC, explained that the majority of its funding came from the Parish Council. Maintenance cost about £3,900 in 2018/19, mainly for grass cutting but also hedge cutting. Sadly, the cherry tree by the entrance had had to be cut down on advice from LDC's tree officer but the cast iron gatepost had gone for repair, with the cost being met from Community Infrastructure Levy money and donations.

The BGC had also found, on annual inspection, that a large number of headstones had become unstable, possibly as a result of the exceptionally hot weather the previous summer. A professional opinion had been sought and stickers put on the relevant headstones. That had upset some relatives, which was a matter of regret to the BGC, and it was hoped to explain more fully in a forthcoming magazine article.

e. Colton Old People's Welfare Committee

Dorothy Bradbury explained that the committee had been founded over 50 years ago and its main function now was to put on the Christmas lunch, which any over 65s in the parish were welcome to attend. It was always an enjoyable occasion, with funds given generously by the Parish Lands Trust to cover the meal, hall hire, gift bag and entertainment and time also given generously by volunteers in the kitchen.

f. Colton Friendship Club

Judy Winter said that the club had had another successful year, with 55 members and monthly events organized by a team of helpers.

These included talks on subjects as diverse as food rationing, a trip down memory lane, rocks and minerals, how to avoid scams and help with hearing loss. The school had visited to sing and there had been visits to Wedgwood and Marsh Farm and a buffet lunch, as well as a fundraising stall at the Christmas Fayre and a generous donation from the PLT towards hall hire and insurance.

g. Colton Women's Institute

Polly Macmillan explained that the group had celebrated its 80th birthday last year, with a meal at Mabel's at Curborough being the highlight. They had a varied programme of speakers and demonstrations as well as occasional craft sessions and outings such as garden visits and always welcomed new members.

h. Colton History Society

Sonia Jenkinson explained that the group was in its 16th year, though had sadly lost one of its founder members, Shirley Carter. There had been a wide range of interesting talks on topics such as map making, Chartley Castle, body snatchers and the salt industry. The society put on an exhibition for the 100th anniversary of WW1, subsidised by the Parish Council. It also had a wealth of other information in its archives in the Bellamour Room, which were being collated and indexed, with an open day being planned. They were also looking to update their website and create a Facebook page.

i. Colton Produce Guild

Richard Monbiot spoke on behalf of the Guild, which had about 40 members. As numbers were dropping, they were looking to bring in younger members and always looking for further ideas. The Guild had a full and varied programme of speakers and had come out top at the SAGGS show.

j. Colton Nature Reserve

Chairman John Macmillan reported that the meadow had largely been left to mature, although additional trees and shrubs had been planted in the hedgerow, together with 2 commemorative trees marking the 80th birthday of Colton WI and in remembrance of Allan Lloyd, who was instrumental in the creation of the reserve. The bug hotel had fallen victim to local badgers and there had been difficulties with the maintenance regime for mowing and grazing. However, work continued with species recording and a members' event was held, with a talk on moths and a moth trapping demonstration.

k. Colton Ramblers

Secretary Gwen Johnson outlined the range of walks undertaken,

meeting on the 3rd Sunday of the month with car sharing and anyone welcome to join. There was a bring and share meal in the summer and a Christmas walk and gathering. They had a very simple website explaining how to report any issues encountered on paths and had also responded to HS2 consultation and contributed to Parish Council petition, to achieve a positive outcome for connecting footpaths.

8. County and District Councillors' reports

District Councillor Shirley Barnett offered apologies from County Councillor Martyn Tittley, who had another meeting to attend at LDC. Roads remained the main issue but Martyn Tittley did give considerable help, although patience was required. The loss of rural transport was another concern as was the reduced presence of the police, with farmers suffering a lot of crime. At LDC, they were reconsidering options for the site, following the cancellation of the Friarsgate project in central Lichfield. The Government Spending Review left more problems every year with reduced funding, staff cuts and SCC having to put more money into adult social care and children's services. However, Shirley Barnett also mentioned the 'I Love Lichfield' fund, which considers requests for up to £1,000, from which local groups could benefit.

9. Report from St Mary's School (Actually taken before item 7)

Jon Wynn, as head of St Mary's, explained his role and that Paul Lovern was now overseeing the academy and business side. The school had 4 classes, totalling 85 children, with only about 10-15% living in Colton. The nursery, introduced 18 months before, was going well and encouraging retention. Various renovations had been carried out, such as a new boiler and redecoration throughout. His particular passion was for outdoor learning, with an allotment and small animals, encouraging a respect for each other and the environment, and there were plans for further outdoor developments. The school was working closely with Rev Anne Noble to emphasise the whole child, and was looking for opportunities to work with the community. Academically, Maths was a key area and the curriculum had been raised to be more challenging to the children. He said the school was always receptive to any ideas that anyone may have.

10. Open discussion including HS2, Planning Application for gas fired generating station off Bellamour Lane and Result of uncontested Parish Council election.

HS2

Parishioner explained that construction works had not yet started, only enabling works and archaeological surveys. Phase 2a had been delayed and would not be put before the Queen before December or early 2020. The budget was 100% overspent and £100billion was now the estimated cost. So the business case was destroyed and there was a stronger case for it to be scrapped, though the amount already spent was a major concern.

Gas fired facility

The PC had made their concerns known. George Burda explained that he, Andy Chappell and Ken Rider were working together to research and comment on issues. They had made constructive contact with Stafford Borough Council and thought that it should be treated as a national project considered by the Secretary of State and not as 2 separate power stations considered by 2 local planning authorities. The main points to stress were that Statera was trying to exploit a loophole and that we needed to get the slot to speak for 5 mins against it at the LDC Planning Committee determination meeting. Various questions were then asked about how the slot would be allocated and how to optimize the chance of Colton's representative getting that slot.

After further discussion, Shirley Barnett drew the meeting to a close at 9.25pm, thanking everyone for their attendance and contributions and thanking councilors for their hard work.

David Bradbury then thanked Shirley Barnett on behalf of parishioners for all she had done as a parish councilor, as she was standing down. She responded by saying that she was leaving a very able team on the council and so it was an appropriate time for her to step down, though she would be standing again in the election for ward councillor for Colton and the Ridwares.